

First class care  
close to you



## Communication Strategy 2008-13

### *Communicating Our Vision*

*"It is our ambition that to be a successful Foundation Trust providing the highest quality cost effective diagnostics and healthcare for our patients on behalf of our commissioners, by an engaged and well motivated workforce, in the most appropriate setting.*

*The hospital will also be an important player in the local community and economy"*

# Index

Contents	Page
Introduction	2
Aims of the Strategy	2
Objectives of the Strategy	3
Determining our Stakeholders	3
Determining our Key Messages	4
Communication Methods	5
Evaluation	9
Appendix 1 Programme of Communication activities	TBC

## **1. Introduction**

Burton Hospitals NHS Trust is committed to constantly improving its communication both within and outside the organisation. The purpose of this strategy is therefore to provide the Trust with a framework for effective communications throughout the organisation and beyond.

The Trust understands the importance of clear, honest, timely and relevant communication, and to this end the document sets out a framework of communications that supports the delivery of the Trusts core business. It also helps to manage and monitor the reputation of the organisation and underpin its core aims, objectives and values.

The strategy is not the start point for communications and builds strongly upon the work already undertaken as part of the previous Strategy, and associated actions that were developed in 2004.

The timing of this document is comes at a critical phase in the development of the Trust, and it is well recognised from within the organisation that as an aspiring Foundation Trust good communication is essential for:

- Engaging and empowering staff in the day-to-day running of our hospital and with our longer-term strategic goals and those of the NHS
- Promoting our good work to all stakeholders and protecting the organisation from unnecessary reputational damage
- Facilitating good working relations between patients/public, partner organisations, stakeholders and key opinion-formers.

### **1.2 Background**

NHS organisations experience unprecedented levels of media and political interest that bring pressures on organisational communications needs. There is every reason to expect these pressures to increase. Open, effective communications with all stakeholders are essential to help drive changes demanded by a modernising NHS.

**1.3** This strategy is based around delivering and supporting three key corporate communications aims of:

- Engaging and empowering staff in the day-to-day running of our hospitals and with our longer-term strategic goals and those of the NHS
- Promoting our good work to all stakeholders and protecting the organisation from unnecessary reputational damage
- Facilitating good working relations between patients/public, partner organisations, stakeholders and key opinion-formers

## **2. Aims of this Communications Strategy**

A communications strategy and infrastructure is required to not only deliver the right messages to the right people at the right times but also to enable the creation of a greater culture of two-way communication and openness within the organisation, in line with the trust's, the HR Strategy, and to support the Trust's Strategic Aims

- To ensure all staff are aware of and share the values and objectives of the organisation in order that they are able to make a positive contribution towards them.
- To ensure the communication of the Trusts values to patients, the public, partners and all other stakeholders.
- To improve public trust and confidence in local acute services.
- To support the Trust in achieving the business objectives of the organisation as outlines in the Service Delivery Strategy.

### **3. Objectives of this Communications Strategy**

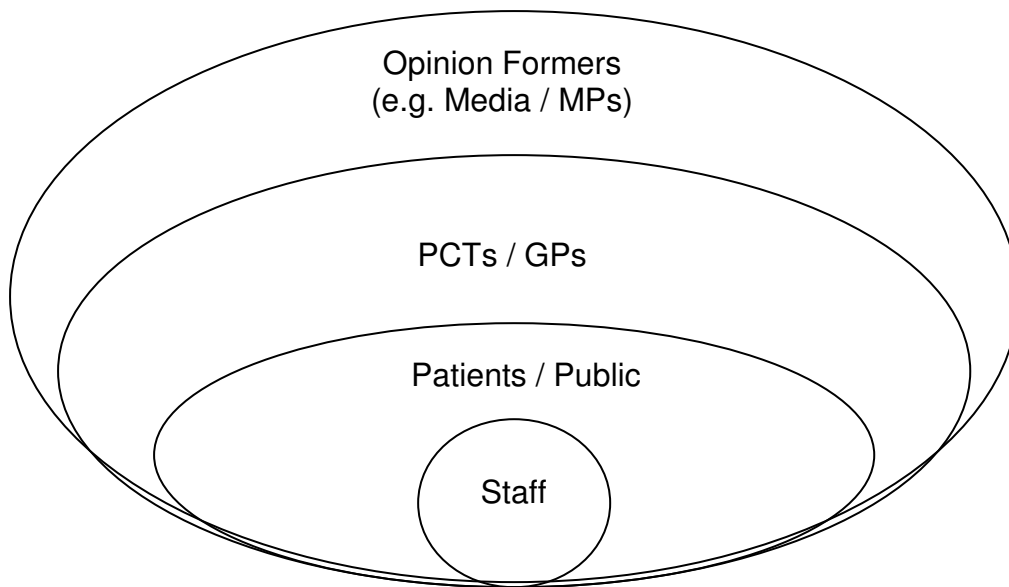
This strategy is designed to enable a policy of active engagement with all key stakeholders in order to enhance and protect our reputation. The longer-term aim is to give the Trust a mechanism to improve delivery of our communications needs and to gain recognition as an NHS organisation operating innovative and excellent communications

The main objectives of the Strategy are as follows

- To put in place internal communications structures, procedures and practices that enable a two way flow of information.
- To put in place external communications structures, procedures and practices that enable a two way flow of information.
- To ensure that the Trust's successes are communicated and celebrated. Lessons learnt will be shared with other organisations and professionals.
- To inform stakeholders about our performance, achievements and plans.
- To position Burton Hospitals NHS Trust as a hospital of choice for patients, ensuring that mechanisms are in place to enable patients to make an informed choice about their care.
- To develop a brand statement upon which all communications will be tested and measured against.
- To market the Trusts vision internally in order to ensure that it is communicated consistency and professionally outside of the organisation.

### **4. Determining our stakeholders**

Our core audience is staff; followed by the public, then partner organisations, then the media and other key opinion formers. It is worth noting the media and other opinion formers (e.g. local MPs, Citizens' Groups) can have a disproportionate influence on public perceptions of our service.



- 4.1 Our key audiences and partners are:
- Our staff and staff of support companies
  - Patients, former patients, their families and carers (as per the trust's PPI strategy)
  - Our local community
  - Patient groups, PPI Fora
  - Our local health and social care partners
  - Key opinion formers; media, MPs and councillors
- 4.2 One in four patients, however, gain their impressions of the health service directly from friends and family who work in the NHS. Those impressions last and they count for a lot. Communicating well with staff is a major step towards communicating favourably with all our audiences. For the purposes of this Strategy communication activities will be focussed on the flowing broad groups of stakeholders.

## 5. Determining our Key Messages

The Trust will seek to use key messages that may be reflected as appropriate in all communications activities

- **Our Commitment to Patients**  
High quality, accessible healthcare is provided safely, according to need, irrespective of age, sex, race, beliefs and ability to pay at a time and place convenient to the patient.
- **Our Commitment to our Staff**

Staff are involved in decision making for the running and future of the Trust and are proud of the organisation they work for.

- **Our Commitment to the Community**  
The community is able to identify with the Trust and have a say in the services provided, through good communication, openness and accountability
- **Our Commitment to Stakeholders**  
The Trust performs well against key targets and priorities are delivered so that stakeholders are able to look to the Trust as a place where new developments are tried or developed
- **Commitment to Working in Partnership**  
Our clinicians work across the care pathway into and out of primary care
- **Commitment to the delivery of high quality services**  
The Trust offers a wide range high quality services.

## **6. Communication Methods**

### **6.1 Internal Communication**

In line with good practice the Trust needs to ensure that good communication structures and processes are in place in order to provide feedback on its aims and objectives as well as providing mechanisms for two-way communications.

The Trust will therefore seek to rely on a range of tools, some of which are new and some of which are already in place.

Staff engagement needs to be improved and the communications department has a key role (alongside Human Resources) to play in fostering a better, more open, working culture.

The key principles of all our internal communications aim to ensure timely and clear communications to our staff in advance of anyone else, wherever possible

- Better two-way communication with an emphasis on consultation and encouraging sensible debate and feedback
- Better access for all staff on all sites to our formal internal communication channels e.g. Intranet, e-mail, paper publications
- Encourage closer links and understanding between management and staff through regular face-to-face briefing sessions
- Provide appropriate training for those staff who require communications coaching e.g. team briefing, media training, computer training

This strategy proposes to make far greater use of technology i.e. Intranet, in order to communicate effectively and consistently with internal audiences and to improve two-way communications, in tandem, with greater face-to-face communication between management and staff

Communicating across the organisation is no easy task given the nature of the workforce, which includes many shift workers and part-time workers, not all of whom have yet got access to PCs, or even the time to access PCs. These factors dictate that the trust will continue to require a wide range of communication channels in order to communicate at all levels of the organisation.

- **Chief Exec Update** – currently a trust-wide cascade briefing system in which has been subject to ongoing review. Line managers may well need refresher training on team brief and team brief processes need to be brought up to date. Feedback mechanisms need to be made more robust
- **E-mail** – currently something of a blunt instrument but the fastest means of communication in the trust. The communications team will continue to seek to reduce the number of “spam” All Staff e-mails and target more emails directly to the appropriate audiences and/or to other communication channels. Staff access to e-mail/PCs needs to continue to improve.
- **Queens Speech** – the award-winning hospital magazine, published bi-monthly and is also available on the Intranet. The magazine carries news and more in-depth features on departments and initiatives. Queens Speech is primarily designed to educate, inform and entertain staff but also the public and GPs.
- **Trust Intranet** – we will seek to continue improving the site and use it as the primary source for information and news across the trust. It has the advantages of being relatively easy to maintain and update, while reducing the reliance on paper. The Intranet also has a discussion forum to promote staff feedback on a wide variety of issues.
- **Face-to-Face** – many of our communications channels are passive and remote, involving top-down information sent out on paper or e-mail, and carry no guarantee staff will absorb the information.
- **Staff induction** – information about accessing communications channels is included in the staff induction process.

### 6.3 External

External communications fall into a number of groups and as such require a range of different approaches all of which can be made available in either paper or electronic format.

With the recent “relaunch” of the Trust’s website the Trust has an opportunity to communicate many of its key messages and updates in a way that is easily accessible to Patients, Carers, GPs and other stakeholders.

#### 6.3.1 Information for patients:

A comprehensive range of patient information will be made easily available and accessible to all patients in line with information governance requirements

#### 6.3.2 Information for GPs:

The Trust will put in place a number of mechanisms in order to improve communication with primary care clinicians including

- Access to Secondary Care Clinicians for information and advice
- Specific communications eg GP Brief
- Online information on the Trusts website
- Regular dialogue through attendance at LMCs, PBCs and Practice visits

### **6.3.3 Information for Stakeholders:**

Stakeholders play a key role in forming opinions and reinforcing the key messages that the Trust wishes to communicate. For those in regular contact with the Trust this can be effectively carried out through the provision of informal dialogue and opportunistic discussions as well as formal review opportunities. For local MPs the Trust will continue to use its twice yearly briefing sessions to channel its main communications, with use of overview and scrutiny to engage local councillors.

## **6.4 Members**

An active and involved membership is essential to the ongoing success and development of the Trust. Members will be encouraged to attend and participate in relevant events designed to ensure that both the Trust and the Members themselves gain maximum value. The Trust will build upon existing mechanisms to ensure that there is a robust mechanism for regular and planned two way communications

A programme for communication and engagement for Governors will also be established, designed to help Governors fulfil their role of overseeing Trust activities.

## **7 Establishing a Corporate Brand**

In line with the development of its Marketing Strategy, the Trust has already considered how it might wish to develop its own corporate identity in line with its existing values and current NHS Guidelines. The Trust will look to develop its own style guidelines to be produced and adopted for use on all Trust literature and publications.

Corporate Publications will be publicly available, accessible to diverse needs e.g. visually/ impaired/foreign languages corporately branded and produced to a quality standard at cost-effective levels:

- Trust Annual report
- Trust Five Year Strategy
- Queens Speech – hospital magazine
- GP Bulletins – GPs, PCTs

## **8 The Media**

Through a review of its external communications the Trust will develop a comprehensive plan for the development of proactive PR and maintenance of

media relations. The plan will be designed to promote positive outcomes from media coverage and enhance the reputation of the Trust.

## **7. Evaluation**

Subject to the approval of this Strategy the Trust will develop a communications action plan detailing key activities required for the forthcoming year. However in order to be able to measure effectiveness the Trust will need to develop a means by which it can demonstrate achievement and effectiveness of the Strategy.

Suggested forms of evaluation

- National Staff Survey
- Healthcare Commission Inpatient Survey
- Reviews by other independent commentators
- Changes in numbers of patient attendances
- Feedback from Primary Care Clinicians.